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TreeLink News

In the works

DNR URBAN and COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROGRAM

It has been more than 100 years since J. Sterling Morton founded Arbor Day. His simple idea of setting aside a special day for tree planting is now more important than ever . . . so have an Arbor Day Celebration.

HOW TO PLANT A TREE CORRECTLY

The goal of tree planting is to have a vigorous, healthy tree that lives to the limits of its natural longevity. Achieving this goal begins with proper tree selection. Next, the tree must be handled carefully until it is safely installed in its new home.

Trees - Handle With Care- Trees are perishable products and must be treated accordingly. These two cardinal rules will help keep your trees alive until you get them into the ground.

- Carry trees carefully. Never pick a tree up by the trunk, the weight of the soil can damage the fine roots. Always provide support beneath balled or potted plants.
- Keep roots moist. This is especially important with bare-root trees, it can take only a matter of minutes to permanently damage the root system on a hot, windy day.

Call Before You Dig- Before digging, always contact your local utility offices.

Planting Bare-Root, Potted Or Burlapped Trees- More than any other change in tree planting procedures is the new focus on the planting hole. It can be summed up by the saying, "It is better to plant a \$50 tree in a \$100 hole than it is to plant a \$100 tree in a \$50 hole." Proper preparation will encourage root growth rather than adding to the difficulties already challenging the young tree. Here's the way to give your tree a boost toward rapid growth and recovery from transplant shock.

This method recognizes the fact that most roots spread through the top 12"-18" of soil in a wide periphery around the tree. Therefore, slope the side of the hole and dig or deeply rototill an area around the hole at least twice the diameter of the ball or container. An area up to five times the diameter is recommended if the soil is compacted, the roots of other trees will not be damaged, and space and aesthetics allow.

- With bare-root trees, make a mound of soil at the bottom of the hole and place the tree so that the roots are straightened and spread evenly around the mound.
- With potted trees, carefully remove the container (even if it is biodegradable) at the planting site, cutting the container if necessary. Check to see if the tree is rootbound. If it is, sever or separate the encircling roots or they will eventually strangle the tree.
- With burlapped trees, it is important to cut and remove all twine around the trunk. Pull the burlap away from the trunk and top third of the ball. Some trees will have wire baskets around the root ball, if possible (without loosening the soil around the roots) remove the basket. If this is not possible, please cut and remove the top two tiers of wire after the ball is set in the hole. A more serious problem occurs when treated burlap and nylon rope are used, both of these should completely be removed. Make sure that no burlap remains above the soil surface - it could act as a wick and dry the root ball.

Planting A Tree Too Deep Can Kill It- Under normal conditions, root growth is best encouraged by planting even with the surrounding terrain. Backfill with native soil unless it is of poor quality. In that case, mix in soil amendments or bring in as much topsoil as possible. Alternate backfilling and watering to remove air pockets, but do not compact the soil.

Watering- Watering is the key to tree survival. It should be used when filling the planting hole to eliminate large air cavities, firm the soil around fine roots, and make nourishment available to the new tree.

Pruning- Leave as much leaf area as possible to help the tree build food reserves. Properly prune out dead or broken limbs, or rubbing branches. Do corrective pruning for shape the second year.

Fertilizing- Avoid fertilizing shade trees until late spring of the second year following planting. Fertilizers can "burn" roots or stimulate crown growth faster than the roots can supply water.

Staking- Stakes and guy wires should only be used if support is necessary. Stakes can cause more harm than good; they can weaken a young tree and girdle it if put on too tightly.

Mulch- Mulch is a young tree's best friend. It holds down competing weeds or grass, retains soil moisture, prevents soil cracking that can damage new roots, protects the trunk from lawnmower damage, and helps prevent soil compaction. Organic mulches such as wood chips also contribute to better soil structure and aeration as they decompose.



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